

וַיָּבֹא בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־הָעֵדָה מִזְבְּחָצָן בְּחַדֶּשׁ הַרְאָשָׁון וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם בְּקָדְשׁוֹ וַיִּמְתַּהֵּת שֵׁם מִרְיָם וַתִּקְבַּר שְׁמָה:

Numbers 20:1

Old JTS	And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there .
New JTS	The Israelites arrived in a body at the wilderness of Zin on the first new moon, and the people stayed at Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there .
Artscroll	The Children of Israel, the whole assembly, arrived at the Wilderness of Zin in the first month and the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and she was buried there .
Kaplan	In the first month, the entire Israelite community came to the Tzin Desert, and the people stopped in Kadesh. It was there that Miriam died and was buried .
Alter	And the Israelites, the whole community, came to the Wilderness of Zin, in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and she was buried there .

וַיִּפְשַׁט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹשׁ אֶתְמָמָן אֶת־אַלְעֹזֶר בֶּן־נַעֲמָן וַיִּמְתַּהֵּת אַהֲרֹן שֵׁם בֶּן־רְאֵשׁ הַהָר וַיַּרְדֵּן מֹשֶׁה וְאַלְעֹזֶר מִן־הַהָר:

Numbers 20:22-29

וַיַּרְא כָּל־הָעֵדָה כִּי־גָוע אַהֲרֹן וַיַּכְפֹּן אֶת־אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כָּל־בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Old JTS	<p>And they journeyed from Kadesh; and the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came unto mount Hor. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom, saying, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah. ...</p> <p>And Aaron died there in the top of the mount; and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.</p>
New JTS	<p>Setting out from Kasesh, the Israelites arrived in a body at Mount Hor. At Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom, the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Let Aaron be gathered to his kin. he is not to enter the land that I have assigned to the Israelite people, because you disobeyed my command about the waters of Meribah. ...</p> <p>And Aaron died there on the summit of the mountain. When Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, the whole community knew that Aaron had breathed his last. All the house of Israel bewailed Aaron for thirty days.</p>
Artscroll	<p>They journeyed from Kadesh and the Children of Israel arrived – the entire assembly – at Mount Hor. Hashem said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying, "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the Land that I have given to the Children of Israel, because you defied My word at the waters of strife. ...</p> <p>Then Aaron died there on the top of the mountain, and Moses and Elazare descended from the mountain. When the entire Assembly saw that Aaron had perished, they wept for Aaron thirty days, the entire House of Israel.</p>
Kaplan	<p>Moving on from Kadesh, the entire Israelite community came to Hor Mountain. At Hor Mountain, God said to Moses and Aaron, "Aaron will [now die and] be gathered up to his people. He will not come to the land that I am giving the Israelites because you rebelled against My word at the Waters of Dispute. ...</p> <p>Aaron died there on the top of the mountain, the people realized that Aaron had died. The entire family of Israel mourned Aaron for thirty days.</p>
Alter	<p>And they journeyed on from Kadesh, and Israelites, all the community came to Hor the mountain. And the Lord said to Moses, and to Aaron at Hor the mountain on the border of the land of Edom, saying, "Let Aaron be gathered to his kin, for he shall not come into the land that I have given to the Israelites because you both have rebelled against My word at the Waters of Meribah. ...</p> <p>Aaron died there on the mountaintop, and Moses came down, and Eleazar with him, from the mountain. And all the community saw that Aaron had expired, and all the house of Israel keened for Aaron thirty days.</p>

וַיָּעַל אַהֲרֹן הַפְּתַח אֶל-הַר הַהִר עַל-פִּי God וַיָּמָת שָׁם בְּשְׁנַת הַאֲרֹבֶּעִים לְצֹאת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִאֶרְץ מִצְרַיִם בְּזַרְחַד הַמִּישִׁי בְּאַתָּה לְחַזֵּשׁ:

Numbers 33:38

Old JTS	And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord , and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first day of the month.
New JTS	Aaron the priest ascended Mount Hor at the command of the Lord and died there, in the fortieth year after the Israelites had left the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.
Artscroll	Then Aaron the Kohen went up to Mount Hor at the word of Hashem and died there, in the fortieth year after the Children of Israel went forth from the land of Edgpt, in the fifth month on the first of the month
Kaplan	Aaron the priest climbed Hor Mountain at G-d's command , and he died there on the first day of the fifth month, in the 40 th year of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. .
Alter	And Aaron the priest went up Hor the Mountain by the Lord's word and died there in the fortieth year of the Israelites' going out from Egypt, in the fifth month on the first of the month.

וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עָבֵד God בָּאֶרְץ מוֹאָב עַל-פִּי God
וַיָּקְבַּר אָתָּה בְּגַן בָּאֶרְץ מוֹאָב מִזְבֵּחַ בֵּית פָּעֹר וְלֹא-יָקַר אִישׁ אֶת-קְבָרָתָו עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
וּמֹשֶׁה בָּזְמָאָה וּצְשָׁרִים שָׁנָה בְּמִתָּו לְאַכְהָתָה עִינָו וְלֹא-גַּס לְחַזָּה:
וַיָּבֹכְוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מֹשֶׁה בְּעֶרֶבֶת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם נִיְתְּמוּ יְמִינֵי בְּכֵי אָכָל מֹשֶׁה:

Deuteronomy 34:5-8

Old JTS	So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord . And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor; and no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended.
New JTS	So Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, at the command of the Lord . He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, near Beth-peor and no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated. And the Israelites bewailed Moses in the steppes of Moab for thirty days. The period of wailing and mourning for Moses came to an end.
Artscroll	So Moses, servant of Hashem, died there, in the land of Moab, by the mouth of Hashem . He buried him in the depression, in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, and no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye had not dimmed, and his vigor had not diminished. The Children of Israel bewailed Moe in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the days of tearful mourning for Moses ended.
Kaplan	It was there in the land of Moab that God's servant Moses died at God's word . [God] buried him in the depression in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor. No man knows the place that he was buried, even to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died, but his eyes had not dimmed, and his natural powers had not left him. The Israelites mourned Moses in the west plains of Moab for thirty days. The wailing period of Moses' mourning came to an end.
Alter	And Moses, the Lord's servant, died there in the land of Moab by the word of the Lord . And he was buried in the glen in the land of Moab opposite Beth-Peor, and no man has known his burial place to this day. And Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eye had not grown bleary, and his sap had not fled. And the Israelites keened for Moses in the steppes of Moab thirty days, and the days of keening in mourning for Moses came to an end.

Miriam, Aaron & Moses: Death, Mourning, Consequences & Legacy
LSS Haskamah Minyan Parsha Class
Parsha Chukath – July 13, 2019

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Moed Katan 28a

Another teaching about the death of Miriam:

למה נסמכה מיתה מרים לפרשת פרה – אמר רבי אמי

– אדרותה – Why is the death of Miriam juxtaposed to the passage about the *parah adumah*?^[7] – לפניך לך – This serves to tell you that פה ארוותה מכפרה – just as the *parah adumah* provides atonement,^[8] – אף מיתתן של צדיקים מכפרה – so do the deaths of the righteous provide atonement.^[9]

A similar teaching:

למה נסמכה מיתה אהרן לבגדי – אמר רבי אלעזר – Why is the death of Aaron juxtaposed to a mention of the Kohanic vestments?^[10] This tells you that פה בגדי ביהונת – just as the Kohanic vestments provide atonement,^[11] – מכפרני – אף מיתתן של צדיקים מכפרה – so do the deaths of the righteous provide atonement.^[12]

Abarbanel

Aaron died there. Since the deaths of Moses and Aaron were decreed simultaneously, why did they die at separate times? First God wished the three siblings to die in the same order that they were born, as they would naturally do; second, Aaron's sin with the Golden Calf preceded Moses' sin with the spies; third, each of them deserved to be mourned 1,000 times – it would be wrong for a single period of mourning to serve for them both.

Chizkuni

ותמה שם מרים, "Miriam died there;" seeing that the dying of the people condemned to die as a result of their acceptance of the spies' majority report had commenced there, Miriam's death as well as Aaron's, is also reported at this juncture.

Hirsch

There Miriam died, and there she was buried. "She had completed her mission on earth. Her grave in Kadesh could tell future generations that she did not leave this world until the new young generation stood ready to enter the Promised Land."

Samson Raphael Hirsch, Isaac Levy translation into English, Pentateuch, Numbers, 2nd edition, Vol.

Ramban on Numbers 20:1

Sin of Aaron & Moses

The sin of Moses and Aaron in the [matter of the] waters of Meribah is not clearly expressed in Scripture. Rashi explains that [their sin consisted of hitting the rock] ... These words are [in the nature of] a homiletic interpretation, but they do not clarify [the matter].

Now Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra has already refuted many claims of the commentators in [their explanations of the nature of] this sin. But the secret to which he alluded is also incorrect ...

Now Rabbeinu Rabbi Moshe [ben Maimon] advanced the following reasoning, and explained "that the sin of Moses ... consisted of tending towards anger ...

Thus, we have solved one of the most difficult problems in the Torah, concerning which many things have been said, and which has been asked many times, namely: what was the sin which Moses committed? Consider what has been said [by others] about it, and what we ourselves have explained, and let the truth prevail."

The most likely explanation amongst all those that have been said about this matter, and the one best suited to answer a questioner, is that of Rabbeinu Chanael, who wrote [in his commentary] that the sin consisted of their saying, "are we to bring forth water out of the rock? They should [not have said are we, but] shall the Eternal bring you forth water? ...

The Truth [Cabalistic explanation] is that this subject [i.e., the nature of Moses' sin in the incident of the waters of Meribah] is one of the great secrets amongst the mysteries of the Torah.

Ramban (Nachmanides) Commentary on the Torah, Numbers. Translated & annotated by Rabbi Dr. Charles B. Chavel.

Siftei Chachamim on Rashi

Just as sacrifices bring atonement. You might ask: Was the red cow a sacrifice? Surely they did not offer any part of it [on the altar]! The answer is based on Rashi's alternative interpretation above (19:9), that the Torah calls it a sin-offering in order to say that it is like the holy sacrifices in that it is forbidden for one to personally benefit from it. From there we learn that it is like a sacrifice.

So do the death of the righteous... You might ask: According to this, shouldn't the Torah have juxtaposed her death to the sacrifices themselves? The answer is that it is juxtaposed to the red cow because they are similar. The deaths of the righteous are not sacrifices, and the red cow is also not a sacrifice per se. Thus we learn one from the other, just as this one brings atonement, so too that one brings atonement.

Moed Katan 28a

Another teaching by R' Elazar about the death of Miriam:

— אִפְּרִים בְּנֵשִׁיךְ מֵתָה — וְאַחֲרֵר רַבִּי אַלְעָזָר
Miriam also died through a "kiss" from God.^[4] אַתְּנָא,, שָׁם,, — This emerges from an analogy between the word *there* written in connection with the death of Miriam, and the word *there* written in reference to the death of Moses.^[5] וְמִבְּנֵי,, שָׁם,, מִמְּשָׁה,, — And why is the phrase, *by the mouth of Hashem*, not stated explicitly in connection with [Miriam]?^[6] — מִבְּנֵי שָׁגָן הַקָּבָר לְאַוְתָרָו — Because it would be indelicate to say such a thing.

Bava Battra 17a

The Gemara asks: **But with regard to Miriam it is not written: “By the mouth of the Lord.”** Rabbi Elazar says: Miriam also died with a kiss, as this is learned through a verbal analogy between the word “there” mentioned in regard to Miriam: “And Miriam died there” (Numbers 20:1), and the word “there” mentioned in regard to Moses: “And Moses died there” (Deuteronomy 34:5). **And for what reason is “by the mouth of the Lord” not stated with regard to her? It is unseemly to mention death by a kiss with regard to a woman.**

Rashi

ומפני אף היא בנסיקה מטה – **MIRIAM DIED THERE.** She, too, died through a kiss.⁶ מטה שם מרים □ שאלינו מה לא נאמר בה,,על פי ה,, – So why did it not say of her “she died by the mouth of HASHEM”?⁷ דרך בבוד של מעלה⁸ – For it is not a respectful manner of speaking with regard to Him Who is on High.⁸

Or HaChaim

— ותמות שם וגוי □ — MIRIAM DIED THERE, ETC.

The verse could have simply said that “Miriam died,” and we would know from the context that she died in Kadesh. Or HaChaim wonders why the verse emphasizes that she died “there”:

רבותינו – **ציריך לדעת טעם אומרו שם** “שם” – Now, our Sages, of blessed memory (*Moed Katan* 28a), infer from our verse that

they did not delay [Miriam’s] burial; rather, they buried her immediately after her death. ורשה זו – **נשמעת מאומרו “ותקבר שם”** – However, this teaching is derived from [the verse’s] subsequent statement, **and she was buried “there,”** which implies that they buried her on the spot, without any delay. But we still need to understand the verse’s first mention of *there*.

Or HaChaim explains:

וראה כי לעד שזוביר מיתה – It seems correct to answer that since [the verse] mentions the death of Miriam, **ח על בבוד העדקה** – [the Torah] was concerned about this slight to the honor of the righteous woman, **שורי אמרו צדיקים בימותם קרוים חיים** – for [our Sages] say (*Berachos* 18a): The righteous, even when they are dead, are called “living.” Thus, the verse’s statement that Miriam “died” might be taken to imply that she was not righteous. **לזה רקך לומר שם** – Therefore, [the verse] was careful to say, *Miriam died there*; **פירוש שם הוא שmeta ולא נשארה בינוים** – meaning, it was only “there” that she died, and did not remain among [the people] in the encampment, **אלא** – **במקום אחר ישנה בין הצדיקים** – but she remains alive elsewhere, among the righteous in Gan Eden. Or HaChaim elaborates: **כי הצדיקים דומים לפניו הקדוש ברוך הוא לזרקלוות המוחים בארכו** – Because in this world, the righteous are before the Holy One, blessed is He, like precious pearls placed in a chest. **בשזה חפץ באחת מקום הוא מוציא מהארכו וקבעה בחתשת אחד מתקבשישו** – When He desires the presence of one of them, He removes it from the chest of this world and sets it in one of His “ornaments” in Heaven. The person is no less alive than before; what has changed is only his or her location before Hashem.^[8]

Or HaChaim now cites the Sages' exposition of the phrase *Miriam died "there"*:

— וְרַبּוֹתֵינוּ זֶה לְדִרְשׁוֹ וְזֶה מִתְמַתָּה שֶׁ לְזִוְירָה שָׁוֹת — **But our Sages, of blessed memory, explain** (*Moed Katan* 28a) the phrase, **[Miriam] died there**, as teaching a *gezeirah shavah* between her death and that of Moshe. The word *there* appears concerning both deaths,^[9] — לְזֹעֲרָה שָׁוָם הִיא מֵתָה בְּנִשְׁקָה — to tell us that **[Miriam] too, like Moshe, died by a "kiss" from Hashem.**^[10] — וְשַׁבְּעִים פְּנִים לְתֹרָה — **And both interpretations are true, for there are seventy approaches to the Torah.**

Siftei Chachamim on Rashi

By the Divine kiss. Since it is written here שׁ ["there"], and concerning Aharon it is also written "Aharon died שׁ ["there"]." Because if it were not for the *gezeirah shavah* [Scriptural comparison] why does the Torah write "שׁ" ["there"] twice regarding Miriam. Perforce it was for the *gezeirah shavah*, to teach that just as there [Aharon died] by the Divine kiss, as it is written, "By the mouth of Hashem," so too here it was by the Divine kiss.

Why then is it not said concerning her, "By the mouth of Hashem." There are those who ask: What was Rashi's difficulty? Didn't he explain that we learn a *gezeirah shavah* from Aharon through the word שׁ ["there"]? The answer is that Rashi is asking: Why is the *gezeirah shavah* necessary? Let the Torah write, "By the mouth of Hashem" explicitly. For we are forced to say that it is not a full *gezeirah shavah*, because if it is, why is it necessary to write "By the mouth of Hashem" regarding Aharon in order to teach that he died by the Divine kiss? We could have learned the *gezeirah shavah* with the word "there" from Moshe. Rather it is certain that this is not a full *gezeirah shavah* and therefore the Torah writes "By the mouth of Hashem" regarding Aharon. Consequently it should have also written "By the mouth of Hashem" for Miriam. Nonetheless, the Gemara (*Moed Katan* 28a) explicitly states that we learn the *gezeirah shavah* from Moshe. Accordingly one must say that Rashi is saying as follows: "She too died by the Divine kiss" meaning that one learns a *gezeirah shavah* from the word "there" [stated] regarding Moshe. However, regarding Aharon it says, "By the mouth of Hashem," thus it is not necessary to learn this from Moshe. This was why Rashi says וּבְאַהֲרֹן ["However, concerning Aharon"] rather than שְׁבָאַהֲרֹן ["That was [said] about Aharon"].

Rashi

– ב„אלה מסעוי“ – And of Aaron – נאמר „על פיו ה“ – by the mouth of HASHEM is stated – ובאחן in the Torah portion which begins “*Eilah Masei*.¹”

Rashi on Moses's death – Deuteronomy 34:5

על פיו ה – BY THE MOUTH OF HASHEM. This means, בנסיקה⁸ – through a kiss.⁸

Midrash Rabbah Chukas 19:20

§20 – ויראו כל העדה כי גוע אהרן – THE ENTIRE ASSEMBLY SAW THAT AARON HAD PERISHED.

The Midrash expounds how the Israelites saw with their own eyes that Aaron had died, since they themselves did not ascend the mountain to witness his death:^[305]

בין שירדו משה ואלעזר מן ההר – When Moses and Elazar

descended from the mountain, – נתקבשו כל סקלה עליהם – the entire assembly gathered around them – ואמרו להם: היכן אהרן – and asked them, “Where is Aaron?” – They replied to them, “He died.” – אמרו להם: מות – [The people] said to them, “How was it possible for the Angel of Death to strike him dead? – אָדָם שָׁעַמַּד בְּמַלְאָךְ הַמְּרוּעָה – Why, Aaron is the person who confronted the Angel of Death and stopped him from killing others,” – דכתיב: “וַיַּעֲמֹד בֵּין הַמְּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִם” – as it is written, *He (Aaron) stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was checked* (above, 17:13). “Surely, then, he can defend himself against the Angel of Death! – אִם אַתֶּם מַבְיאִין אֶתְנוֹ מַוְעַב – Therefore, if you bring [Aaron] back to us, then fine; – אִם לֹא נִסְקַל אֶתְכֶם – but if not, we will stone both of you!”^[306] – באותה שעה עמד משה בחתולה – At that time, Moses stood in prayer before God, – ואמר: רבונו של עולם, הוציאנו – and said, “Master of the Universe! Remove us from suspicion!” – מיד פתח הקדוש ברוך הוא את המערה והראו להם Immediately, the Holy One, blessed is He, opened the cave in which Aaron was buried, and showed him to [the Israelites], – שנאמר: “וַיַּרְא כָּל הָעֵדָה כִּי גוע אהרן” – as it is stated, *The entire assembly saw that Aaron had perished*, indicating that they saw with their own eyes.^[307]

Rashi

29. – בְּשָׁרָא מֹשֶׁה וְאֶלְעֹזֶר יוֹרְדִים – When they saw Moses and Elazar descending, – אָמְרוּ – and Aaron did not descend, – וְאֶחָרֶן לֹא יָרַד – they said, – “Where is Aaron?” – אָמְרוּ – [Moses] said to them, – מַתָּ – “He is dead.” – They said, – אָמְרוּ – that he who stood opposite the Angel of Death could fall under the domination of the Angel of Death? – מִי שָׁעַמְדָ בְּנִגְדַ הַמַּלְאָך – Moses immediately sought mercy, i.e., prayed, – וַיָּשַׁלַּט בּוּ מַלְאָך הַמוֹת – and the ministering angels showed [Aaron] to them, – מַטָּל בְּמִטָּה – and Aaron was placed on the bed. – וְהָרְאָוּ מַלְאָכִי הַשְׁרָת לֵהֶם – They saw, and they believed.³

- RASHI ELUCIDATED

the verse means – **שָׁנְסַפְתָּלָקָו עֲנֵנִי בְּבוֹד** – that the Clouds of Glory departed after Aaron's death, – **אַל תִּקְרֹרְיָוּ וַיְרָאָוּ** – and as R' Abahu said, – do not read the verse as saying "[the entire assembly] saw," – **אַלְאָוּ וַיְרָאָוּ** – but rather, "[the entire assembly] was seen,"¹ i.e., the exposed, rendered vulnerable.² To this vocalization of **וַיְרָאָוּ וְלֹא לְשׁוֹן וְהַ** – the sense of **לְמַה שְׁלֹמְעָלָה** – for it gives a reason – **לְפִי שְׁחִיא נְתִינַת טָעַם** – for that which precedes it, as follows: – **לְמַה וַיְרָאָוּ** – why "were they seen"? – **לְפִי שְׁהָרִי מַת** – for that which precedes it, as follows: – **אַתָּה נְרָאָוּ** – **הַיָּמָנוּ** – **אַבְלָל עַל תְּרֻגּוֹם וְחוֹבֵל בְּגַשְׁתָּאָ** – Because, see now, Aaron died. But regarding the version of *Targum Onkelos* which renders our verse as "the entire assembly saw," – **אַיִן לְשׁוֹן וְהַ** – the sense of "because" does not apply, – **אַלְאָ לְשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר** – but rather the sense of the word **שְׁמַצִּינוּ**,³ which is one of the forms in which **אִי** functions,⁴ – **שְׁהָוָא מְגֻזָּה שְׁמוֹשׁ אִי**, "that," – **אֲשֶׁר**, "that," or – **אִם** functioning in the sense of **אֲשֶׁר**, "that" or "which," – for we find the word **אִם** – as in, "And is there a reason that my spirit not feel constricted?"⁵ – **וְאִם מְרוּעָה לְאַתְקָרְ רֹוחִי** – And many instances of **אִם** are explained as being of this sense, for example, – **אִם חֲרוֹצִים יְקַוּ**,⁶ – "that [the number of] his days are fixed."⁶

Ibn Ezra

The whole community knew. Rather, they “saw” – not that they watched Aaron die, but they saw all the events surrounding his death and understood what had happened.

ויראו כל העדה. כאשר ראו זה המאורע שאירע בכו שלשים ים

Chizkuni

The entire congregation saw, etc." since this verse cannot be understood literally, the Jerusalem Targum renders it as meaning that when the people witnessed Moses and Elazar returning without Aaron, they drew the appropriate conclusions, [especially, seeing that Elazar wore the garments of the High Priest, as described in verse 28. Ed.] They observed Moses having ash on his head and having rent his garments, calling out to Elazar, "woe for my brother Aaron!" An alternate interpretation: we find that the expression ראה, "seeing" is also used to describe "knowing," i.e. seeing with one's mental eye. Prominent examples are: Genesis 40,16, where the chief of the bakers is described as "seeing" that Joseph had properly explained the dream of the chief of the cup bearers. Another example of the root: ראה describing "understanding," rather than seeing with one's eyes, is found in Genesis 42,1 where our patriarch Yaakov is credited with seeing that there was grain for sale in far off Egypt, i.e. וירא יעקב כי יש שבר למצרים, "Yaakov "saw" that there was trading in grain going on in Egypt." The author cites more examples.

The Commentators' Bible: JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot

MaAm Lo'ez

How the people know about Aaron's death and reacted

"They therefore threatened Moses and Eleazar with stoning unless they produced Aaron. Confounded, in confusion, pain and perplexed, Moses offered a prayer to God, and his prayer was accepted. He commanded the angels to extract the urn of Aaron and place it in the air so that all the Israelites would see it and stop accusing Moses and Eleazar.

When the angels did as commanded and the couch of Aaron was suspended in the air, God passed before it and eulogized him as follows. ...

When the Israelites beheld the eulogy offered by God and the angels, they too began to eulogize him, the young no less than the old, the men as well as the women; and a period of great mourning ensued, lasting thirty days.

The public mourning which followed was never equaled in scope. When Miriam died, only Moses and Aaron mourned for her; and not even for Moses did all the Israelites mourn ...

When Moses beheld Aaron's couch suspended in mid-air, with God and the angels on all sides mourning for him, he wept. "Woe is me that I have remained alone and isolated! When Miriam died the Israelites did not come to mourn her, but I and Aaron at least performed the last rites for her. Now Aaron has passed away, I and Eleazar render him his due. But who will take care of me when I die? For I am bereft now of father and mother, of brother and sister."

Whereupon God said to him, "Do not be concerned, for the honor you receive will be greater than theirs. I, Myself, will be at hand to perform the last rites of burial for you. And just as the crypt of Aaron vanished, so will your crypt vanish and no man will know its locations. Moreover, just as the Angel of Death had no power over Aaron, for it was with a kiss from Me that he passed away, so will you die with a kiss."

Only then was Moses comforted.

MaAm Lo'ez (Torah Anthology) by Rabbi Yitzchok Magriso, translated by Dr. Tzvi Faier, edited with notes by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

Rashi on Moses's death – Deuteronomy 34:6

6. – **ברוך הוא בלבבו** – HE BURIED HIM. – **הקדוש ברוך הוא בלבבו** – The Holy One, Blessed is He, in His glory, buried Moses.¹ – **הוא קבר את עצמו** – [Moses] – **רבי ישמעאל אומר** – This is one of the three instances of forms of the word buried himself. – **שהיה רבי ישמעאל דורש כן את ביוצא בו** – which R' Ishmael would interpret in this way. Likewise, we find, – **ביום מלאת ימי נורו נוריא אותו**,² – "On the day his status as a *nazir* is completed he shall bring him,"² where the clause containing the word **אותו**, "him," a form of **את**, means **אותו** – he brings himself. – Likewise, we find, – **ובמי אחורים גשויאים אותו אשמה**,³ – "And they will cause them to bear the sin of guilt."³ – **ובמי אחורים גשויאים אותו** – Now, is it others who cause them to bear it? – **אלא** – Rather, the verse means – **הם גשויאים את עצםם**,⁴ – they cause themselves to bear.⁴

Gd buried Moses as even he doesn't know where he is buried

Sotah 13b & 14a

The verse describing the burial of Moses states: “**And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth Peor**; and no man knows of his grave to this day” (**Deuteronomy 34:6**). **Rabbi Berekhya says:** This verse provides a sign within a sign, i.e., a very precise description of the location of his burial, and even with this the verse concludes: “**And no man knows of his grave to this day**” (**Deuteronomy 34:6**).

The Gemara relates: And the evil monarchy of the Roman Empire already sent messengers to

the garrison [*gastera*] of Beth Peor and said to them: Show us where Moses is buried. As the men stood above on the upper section of the mountain, it appeared to them as if the grave was below in the lower section. As they stood below, it appeared to them to be above. They divided into two groups, one above and one below. To those who were standing above, the grave appeared to them to be below; to those who were standing below, the grave appeared to them to be above, to fulfill that which is stated: “**And no man knows of his grave to this day**” (**Deuteronomy 34:6**).

Rabbi Ḥama, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, says: Even Moses our teacher himself does not know where he is buried. It is written here: “**And no man knows of his grave**,” and it is written there: “**And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death**” (**Deuteronomy 33:1**). In other words, even Moses, as he is referred to by the term “man,” does not know his burial place. **And Rabbi Ḥama, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, says:** For what reason was Moses buried near Beth Peor? In order to atone for the incident that transpired at Beth Peor (**Numbers, chapter 25**).

Rashbam

RASHBAM 6 He buried him. Rather, “one buried him,” that is, “he was buried” (OJPS). The same syntax occurs in “Can horses gallop on a rock? Can it be plowed with oxen?” (Amos 6:12), where the Hebrew literally asks, “Can [some unknown] he plow it with oxen?” Since no one knew his burial place, the one who buried him was also unidentified, and the text simply writes that “someone” buried him. [F]

Ibn Ezra

IBN EZRA 6 He buried him. He buried himself by entering a burial cave in the valley. The pronoun is used with this meaning also in “the foremen of the Israelites found *themselves* in trouble” (Exod. 5:19) and “the shepherds tended *themselves* instead of tending the flock” (Ezek. 34:8). In

ויקבר אותו. הוא כבר עצמו שנכנס במערה
בגיא וכן וירעו הרועים אותו ויראו שוטרי בני
ישראל אותו ודע כי הרים שהוא הרים

Kli Yakar

ולא היה מים לעדה. על צד העונש חסרו המים לפי שלא הספידה
כראוי, כי במשה ואהרן נאמר ויבכו אותו בני ישראל וכאן לא נאמר ויבכו
אותה ונאמר ותמת שם ותקבר שם, כי מקום שמתה שם תהא קבורה
לאלתר ונשכחנה כמת מלך ולא הרגשו בהעדרה כלל ע"כ נחסרו להם
המים כדי שידעו למפרע שהבאר היה בזכות מרים ורוז"ל (פזיק כה) אמרו
שנסמכה מיתתה לפרט פרה לומר לך מה הקרבנות מכפרים אף מיתת
הצדיקים מכפרת, ולמה נסמכה דזוקא לפרט כי באמת אינה קרבן רק מה
שמצינו שקראה הכתוב חטא, (במדבר יט ט) אבל העיקר הוא שם
שהפרה באה לקנה צואת בנהvr כך הצדיק אם כל חי במיתת מקנחת
צואת תולדותיה.

The well stopped providing water after Miriam's death was punishment for the people not mourning her properly.

Or Hachaim

Why indeed did they not participate in Miriam's eulogy? Or HaChaim explains:

אמר הקב"ה ותעטם שלא גמלו חסיד — As for *why they did not show kindness* to Miriam by eulogizing her, the verse says just below, *Miriam died there and she was buried there*, and [the Sages] teach in the Gemara (Moed Katan 28a), and this is a quote: ותעטם וגוי סמוך למייתה קבורה — *[Miriam] died there and was buried there*. This implies that her burial was soon after her death. ערך כאן — The quote ends here. ולטעם זה לא הרישו לכא לגמול חסיד — It was for this reason that [the people] did not know to show her the kindness

of a eulogy, because by the time they heard about her death, she had already been buried; ובקישר זמן מוצט עד שירעו קפץ עליהם רונו של צמא — and in the short time that had passed from her burial until they learned about her death, the torment of thirst sprung upon them, since the well had disappeared with Miriam's death, and they became too preoccupied to engage in her eulogy. וזה מה שאמר — This is why immediately after saying, *and she was buried there*, the verse says, *There was no water for the assembly*. It is to teach us that all these things occurred one right after the other: Miriam's death and immediate burial, the disappearance of the well and its immediate impact on the people, and the people gathering to complain to Moshe and Aharon.^[5]

Alshich

The entire community of Bnei Yisroel came. The Midrash says that while Moshe and Aharon were busy with the burial of Miriam, they saw a multitude of the Bnei Yisroel coming. Aharon thought they were coming to do kindness with Miriam. However, Moshe told him that if so, they would have come with the elders leading the way, etc.

This teaches that the Bnei Yisroel should have done a kindness for Miriam, especially considering that they drank in the Wilderness in her merit. They realized this immediately upon her death and it was indisputable, for there had been many wells and they lived in Kodesh for many days, and suddenly the water disappeared.

Also, "and [Miriam] was buried there" — implying that there was no trouble for them to bestow kindness by participating in her funeral. Therefore, they were punished by the lack of water.

Rashi

בְּכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל — THE ENTIRE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. — **הָנָשִׁים וּהַנְּשִׁים** — The men and the women, וּמְשִׁילֵל אַהֲבָה — for Aaron would pursue peace — and instill love between parties to a quarrel — **בֵּין בָּעֵלָה מְרִיבָה** — and between a man and his wife.⁴

Rashi on Moses's death – Deuteronomy 34:8

מִתּוֹךְ אֶבֶל אַהֲרֹן — THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. — **הַזָּכְרִים** — The males. — **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** — But of Aaron, because he would pursue peace — and instill peace between man and his fellow man — **בֵּין אִישׁ לְרֵעָהוּ** — and between a wife⁵ and her husband,⁴ — it says, **וּבְנִים וּבָנָות** — "The entire House of Israel [wept for him],"⁵ males and females.⁶

Rabbeinu Bahya on Bamidbar 20:29

וַיַּבְכُו אֶת אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל . “the entire house of Israel wept for the passing of Aaron for thirty days.” The expression **בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** includes men and women. When the Torah reports the mourning of Moses the word **בֵּית** is absent, as the Torah writes “**וַיַּבְכُו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה** the Children of Israel wept for the passing of Moses in the fields of Moav for thirty days” (Deut. 34,8). The difference was that Aaron, in his capacity of striving always to restore harmonious relations between people patched up many marriages. This is why men and women alike wept for his passing (compare Rashi).

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 34:8

וַיַּבְכُו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל . וּבְאַהֲרֹן אָמַר (בָּמְדִבָּר כ כט) כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל (אַדְרַנְג פָּרָק יב) נָתַנוּ טָעַם לְפִי שְׁהִיא אֶוְהָב שָׁלוֹם כ"ז:

The Jewish people wept, etc. When Aaron's death is reported in **Numbers 20,29**, the Torah wrote that "the whole house of Israel wept for thirty days." Our sages in *Avot de Rabbi Natan* 12 claim that Aaron's having been a lover of peace was the reason why he was mourned even more than Moses when he died.

Rabbi Avraham ben Ezra wrote that the line in Numbers refers to the whole house of Israel weeping in honour of Moses who remained alive. One must not accept his explanation as it is not permissible to change a verse which describes a virtue of the people and to downgrade this virtue by attributing it to a less noble consideration. By doing so Ibn Ezra suggests that when Moses himself died the people did not get unduly upset when he was being eulogised.

Perhaps we may understand the difference in the people's reaction to the two deaths as stemming from the fact that Aaron's death was unexpected whereas they had been informed well in advance that Moses was about to die. The sudden realisation that Aaron had died had a more profound effect on the people. Moses had told the people for six weeks running, during all his exhortations, that he was approaching his death (compare **Deut. 4,22**). No wonder that they did not react as profoundly at the time Moses was eulogised as at the time Aaron was eulogised.

Another possible reason for the difference in the reported reaction of the people was due to the immediate **visible** effects of Aaron's death such as the disappearance of the protective clouds which had hovered over the encampment of the Israelites ever since the Exodus. Their disappearance had been followed immediately with an attack by the Canaanite as explained in *Taanit 3*. These factors combined to stir the entire nation into weeping at Aaron's death. When Moses died they did not experience such a negative fallout; on the contrary, they knew the way was clear to cross the Jordan and take possession of the land of Canaan.

Still another possibility to explain this relatively muted reaction by the Jewish people to Moses' death was the fact that immediately after Moses died the *Shechinah* settled on Joshua. The people took comfort from this fact. This may be compared to someone who has lost a bag of precious stones, but has found some pearls instead. Although he mourns the loss of the stones, he does not do so with the same intensity as he would have done had he not found the pearls. This is why not all of the people wept at Moses' death. This is also the reason that the report of the people weeping for the death of Moses is followed immediately by the report that Joshua was filled with a spirit of wisdom, etc. When Aaron had died this was equivalent to the loss of diamonds which had not been replaced by other precious stones. Even though Eleazar was appointed as High Priest in his father's stead, they did not weep for the absence of a High Priest but for the loss of something which was irreplaceable, i.e. the benefits Aaron's presence had bestowed upon them.

Tannit 9a

The Gemara raises an objection from a Baraita: Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says: Three good sustainers rose up for the Jewish people during the exodus from Egypt, and they are: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. And three good gifts were given from Heaven through their agency, and these are they: the well of water, the pillar of cloud, and the manna. He elaborates: The well was given to the Jewish people in the merit of Miriam; the pillar of cloud was in the merit of Aaron; and the manna in the merit of Moses. When Miriam died the well disappeared, as it is stated: "And Miriam died there" (Numbers 20:1), and it says thereafter in the next verse: "And there was no water for the congregation" (Numbers 20:2). But the well return in the merit of both Moses and Aaron.

And Aaron died the clouds of glory disappeared, as it is stated: "And the Canaanites, the King of Arad heard" (Numbers 33:40). What report did he hear? He heard that Aaron had died and the clouds of glory had disappeared, and he thought that the Jewish people were no longer protected by Heaven and therefore he had been given permission to go to war against the Jewish people. And this disappearance of the clouds is the meaning of that which is written: "And all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead" (Numbers 20:29).

Rabbi Abbahu said: Do not read the verse as: "And they saw"; rather, read it as: And they were seen, as the clouds which had concealed the Jewish people were temporarily removed. This is as Reish Lakish taught. As Reish Lakish said: the term *ki* actually has at least four distinct meanings: If; perhaps; but; because, or that. According to this interpretation, the verse would be rendered: And all the congregation was seen, because Aaron was dead.

The barita continues: Both the well and the clouds of glory returned in the merit of Moses. However, when Moses died all of them disappeared. As it is stated: "And I cut off the three shepherds in one month" (Zechariah 11:8). But did the three shepherds really die in one month? Didn't Miriam die in the month of Nisan, and Aaron in Av and Moses in Adar? Rather this verse teaches us that with the death of Moses the three good gifts that were given through their agency were annulled, and all three gifts disappeared in one month, which made it seem as though all three leaders had died at the same time.

Rashi

שֶׁבֶל 2 – **וְלֹא הָיָה מִים לְעַדָּה** – THERE WAS NO WATER FOR THE ASSEMBLY. – מִבְּאָן – From here we see – **הָיָה לְהַمְּבָאָר אֶת-בְּעֵשֶׂם שָׁנָה** – that the entire forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness – **בְּנֹכֹת מִרְיָם** – they had the Well – through the merit of Miriam.²

Ibn Ezra – Numbers 20:2

2 The community was without water. The notion that a well followed the Israelites around the desert on account of the merit of Miriam is some individual's midrash. If such a miracle occurred, why is it not mentioned in the Torah? Instead, we are told plainly, "He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as if from the great deep" (Ps. 78:15). The inventor of the midrash based himself on the juxtaposition of vv. 1 and 2, but this is no proof; these are two separate events that happened at the same place. If he disagrees, let him tell us who died at Rephidim, where "there was no water for the people to drink" (17:1)! So the community being without water has nothing to do with Miriam's death. But it does have to do with the deaths of

ולא היה מים לעדה. ספר הכתוב
שנים מאורעים האחד מות מרים והשני
מות אהרן ומשה ולא יכנסו לארץ
והחל בספר הסבה

Moses and Aaron before they could enter the land. The text will now tell us why and how that happened.

Class outline

- Timing of Miriam & Aaron's death
 - Normal or natural
 - Punishment – individual or collective
 - Atonement - individual or collective
 - Necessary change from mentality of Egypt
- Deaths - How were Miriam & Aaron's deaths described
- Mourned - how were Miriam & Aaron mourned
- Consequences of Miriam & Aaron's death and why
- Legacy of Miriam & Aaron – difference between prophets, priest, & kings/leaders